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Berceau Offers Legislation to Stop the Assault on Science in Wisconsin Schools

This landmark bill seeks to stem the growing tide of intelligent design and other specious science

MADISON - During a press conference tomorrow in the State Capitol, Representative Terese Berceau (D - Madison) will announce legislation to protect science instruction in Wisconsin public schools from political and religious influence. Approximately 25 University of Wisconsin science professors will also attend the press conference. Berceau's bill will ensure that material presented **as science** in our schools is testable, describes only natural processes, and is consistent with any definition of science developed by the National Academy of Science.

The press conference is planned for 9:30 A.M., Tuesday, February 7 in the Assembly Parlor, at the State Capitol in Madison.

"A 2005 study by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation gave Wisconsin's science standards a grade of "F", making us one of 15 states to receive a failing grade," Representative Berceau said. "The report indicated our current science standards are 'so light in science discipline content as to render them nearly useless' ".

Wisconsin is well-positioned to be a national leader in technology industries, including biotechnology. UW – Madison is at the forefront of cutting edge research in this area. The world is becoming more fiercely competitive every day. Other countries recognize the value of education, especially in math and science, and are poised to take the lead. If our students are to compete, they must be taught legitimate science.

"Attempts to introduce pseudo-science such as intelligent design, and even to change the definition of science, are underway in a number of school districts," stated Professor Michael M. Cox, Assistant Chair of the Department of Biochemistry at UW – Madison, who will be speaking at the press conference Tuesday. "Assuring that only real science is presented as science in our schools is critical to the future supply of trained scientists. Our commitment to good science education directly impacts the vitality of the scientific enterprise in Wisconsin and the health of our economy."

The Fordham report identified the teaching of evolution as one particular area of science where states are falling short. It notes, "A disturbing and dangerous trend over the past five years, in response to religious and political pressures, is the effort to water down the treatment of evolution". The Union of Concerned Scientists has expressed outrage over the growing tide of political interference into scientific research. The President of Cornell University and the Dean of the Stanford University School of Medicine have both issued strong warnings about the growing anti-science movement in America

"Over 18 states have introduced legislation this year to dilute the teaching of evolution and open the door to 'intelligent design,'" Berceau noted. "We have seen attempts to enshrine the teaching of intelligent design **as science** in Kansas and in Dover, Pennsylvania — even in Grantsburg, Wisconsin, in our own backyard.

"We are swiftly approaching a crossroads. Grantsburg is no fluke. However, there have been no legislative initiatives to counter the continued war on science. Today, we are offering the first bill in the nation to protect the integrity of science instruction in public schools," said Berceau.

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